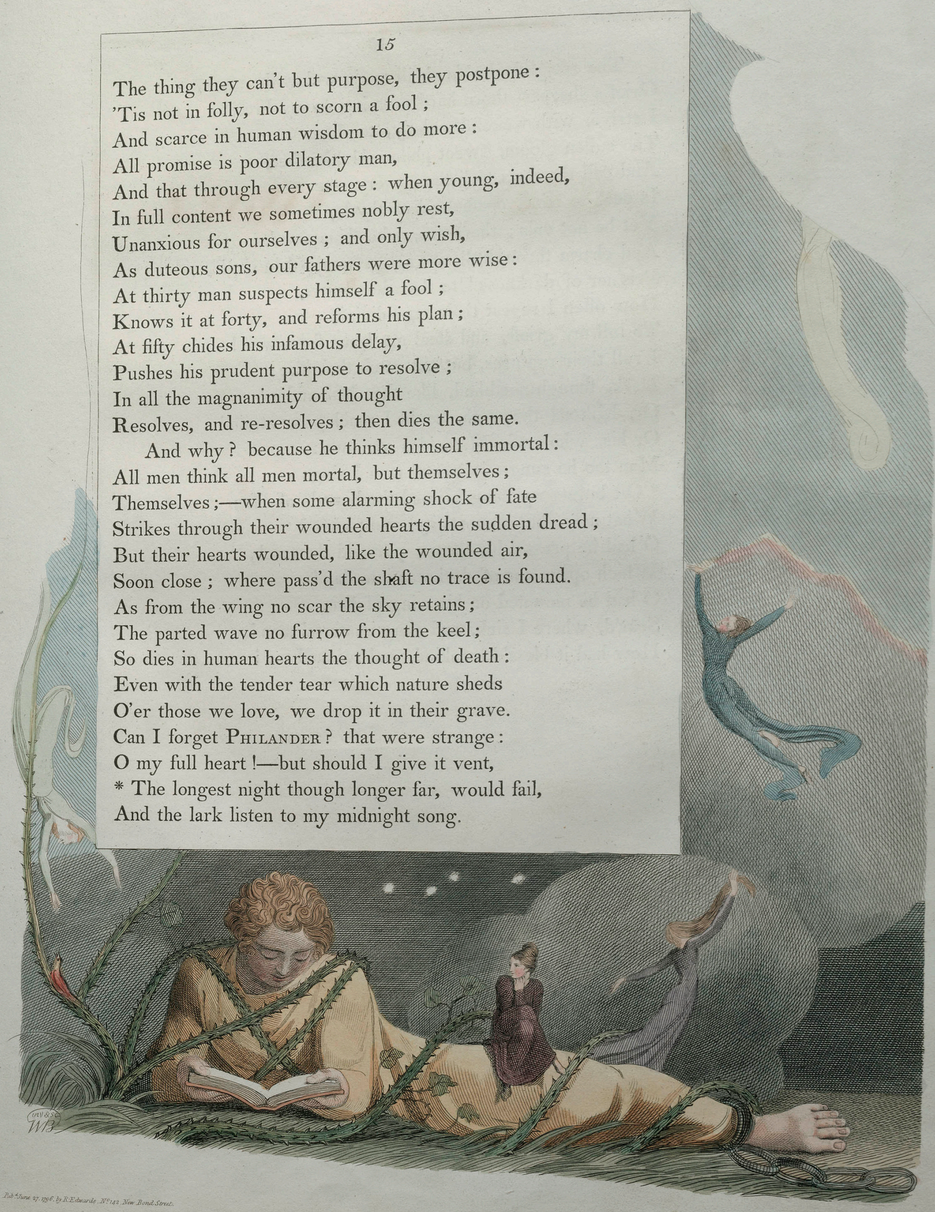
As on a rock of adamant we build
Our mountain hopes ; spin our eternal schemes,
As we the fatal sisters would outspin,
And, big with life's futurities, expire.
Not even PHILANDER had bespoke his shroud,
Nor had he cause ; a warning was denied :
How many fall as sudden—not as safe !
As sudden, though for years admonish'd home.
Of human ills the last extreme beware,
Beware, LORENZO ! a slow-sudden death :
How dreadful that deliberate surprise !
Be wise to-day, 'tis madness to defer ;
Next day the fatal precedent will plead ;
Thus on, till wisdom is push'd out of life :
Procrastination is the thief of time ;
Year after year it steals, till all are fled ;
And to the mercies of a moment leaves
The vast concerns of an eternal scene :
If not so frequent, would not this be strange ?
That 'tis so frequent, this is stranger still.
Of man's miraculous mistakes, this bears
The palm, " That all men are about to live"—
For ever on the brink of being born.
All pay themselves the compliment to think
They one day shall not drivel ; and their pride
On this reversion takes up ready praise,
At least their own, their future selves applauds :
How excellent that life they ne'er will lead !
Time lodged in their own hands is folly's vails ;
That lodged in fate's, to wisdom they consign ;

The thing they can't but purpose, they postpone :
'Tis not in folly, not to scorn a fool ;
And scarce in human wisdom to do more :
All promise is poor dilatory man,
And that through every stage : when young, indeed,
In full content we sometimes nobly rest,
Unanxious for ourselves ; and only wish,
As duteous sons, our fathers were more wise :
At thirty man suspects himself a fool ;
Knows it at forty, and reforms his plan ;
At fifty chides his infamous delay,
Pushes his prudent purpose to resolve ;
In all the magnanimity of thought
Resolves, and re-resolves ; then dies the same.
And why ? because he thinks himself immortal :
All men think all men mortal, but themselves ;
Themselves ;—when some alarming shock of fate
Strikes through their wounded hearts the sudden dread ;
But their hearts wounded, like the wounded air,
Soon close ; where pass'd the shaft no trace is found.
As from the wing no scar the sky retains ;
The parted wave no furrow from the keel ;
So dies in human hearts the thought of death :
Even with the tender tear which nature sheds
O'er those we love, we drop it in their grave.
Can I forget PHILANDER ? that were strange :
O my full heart !—but should I give it vent,
* The longest night though longer far, would fail,
And the lark listen to my midnight song.



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